

August 15, 1995

Professor Horace Judson
History Department
George Washington University
Washington, D.C. 20052

Dear Horace:

Paul gave me your piece about Rosalind Franklin to read. I enjoyed it, in particular the new insights gained from your communication with other women working at King's College in the same period. Perhaps you will be interested in the two comments that occurred to me.

First, your piece reminded me of a question I had after reading Sayre's book years ago. Does a full understanding of Franklin's situation at King's require examining the anti-Semitism, both implicit and explicit, that may have existed in the Laboratory? It has always seemed to me that in addition to the perception of her personality as being difficult, and the issue of gender, it could well be that anti-Semitism was an important element in her situation. For example, was her absence from the Saturday lunches you describe a consequence of family expectations for the Sabbath?

Second, being close to the generation of women you interviewed, I probably have less confidence in their statements than you do. I myself, when asked, have stated that I never detected any bias against myself because I was a woman in my early career at NIH. I now know that few, if any, of my contemporaries at NIH would agree. And I am no longer so sure that my earlier statements were correct. The fact is, I don't think I would have known even if the bias existed. It was not a subject we thought about or discussed. It was not "in the air" as it is now. A lot of the behavior that we simply accepted as "normal" would today, quite properly, be seen as biased and unacceptable.

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Less seriously, but perhaps not irrelevant, I would disagree with your characterization of Maurice Wilkin's physical appearance. I only remember seeing him a couple of times, but even with your limitation (i.e., the clergyman) I would never have said he had a "kind of good looks". I recall him as being rather funny looking and homely.

I hope we'll see you at some of the Capital Science lectures this coming year.

Best regards,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Maxine".

Maxine F. Singer

MFS/sb

cc: Dr. Paul Berg